

# THE AMERICAN COLLEGE BULLETIN

Published by the Council of Church Boards of Education

50c. per annum; 10 or more subscriptions, 40c. each

Executive Secretary, ROBERT L. KELLY  
Survey Secretary, B. WARREN BROWN

ISSUED BI-WEEKLY  
19 So. La Salle St., Chicago, Ill.

*Entered as second class matter October 29, 1917, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879.*

Volume 1

MAY 4, 1918

No. 15

## THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The tendency of the last few years has been toward a closer relationship between the forces of religion and education.

The obstacles which caused or helped to perpetuate a division are largely passing away. Sectarian rivalries no longer bulk largely in present day thought and most of the denominations, if not identified, are at least acting together in their educational policies. The traditional conflict between science and religion has practically died out and great scientists today are numbered among the most ardent religious leaders. Conditions are therefore favorable to a closer understanding between education and religion.

Again, the application of educational psychology has demonstrated that the highest education must develop the individual as a whole, not as a one-sided personality. Training of the intellect without the discipline of the will is no longer accepted as sound education. The views of a wide range of educational and social leaders converge almost without exception on the point that education without the moral and religious elements is essentially sterile. Horne, in his "Psychological Principles of Education" says, "Too frequently religious education has been regarded as a thing apart. Rather is it the natural and logical conclusion of all education, just as religion is the natural and complete expression of man's being." In the words of Dr. Hadley: "To produce character, education must call to her assistance religion," or, as Roosevelt states it: "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." President Wilson said essentially the same thing when he stated that "the religion of humanity and the comprehension of humanity are of the same breed and kind and they go together." President King, of Oberlin, writes: "Education and religion should be so interwoven that each becomes a part of the other." We note in this connection the words of Nicholas Murray Butler: "Education is the gradual adjustment to the spiritual possessions of the race;" and of George Albert Coe:

"Thus religion, instead of being a department of education is an implicit motive thereof. It is the end that presides over the beginning and gives unity to all stages of the process." Many other witnesses could be called to show that the fundamental relationship between religion and the highest type of education is more thoroughly recognized today than ever before and that this recognition is based on sound psychological principles.

That this relationship is also recognized practically in our present educational system is evident in many ways. The churches endorsed a forward movement based on this principle when the Boards of Education of nineteen denominations came together in a campaign inaugurated for the specific purpose of emphasizing "the supreme place of religion in education." They are conducting this campaign not only in the interest of denominational colleges, but also of religious centers in state institutions. The government recognized this relationship when it went to the colleges, denominational as well as state, for thousands of officers in the national army and officially urged all young people under draft age to avail themselves of college training in the interest of conserving our supply of leaders. The people have come to value more highly the religious elements in education by contrast with Germany. One needs only to study German practices to note some of the consequences of highly intellectual development unchecked by a corresponding moral development.

---

### Student Church Membership

In the light of facts recently established, religious forces and higher education in this country seem to have a more intimate connection than is indicated even by the above tendencies. In 54 state institutions of higher education this last year, 51,981 students, or 87% out of a total of 59,613, express denominational preference. (2,336, or 4%, express no preference and the remainder failed to report.) Returns from about half of these schools report church membership, distinct from mere preference, as follows:

Membership, 29,880 or 77.4%—Preference 8,717.

**On this basis we can safely assume that at least 70%, probably 75%, of the students in state institutions are church members.** (A study by Dr. Hughes in 1914 covering a smaller number of students, 13,270, in state institutions, indicated that 66% of these were communicants.)

Turning now to evidence which seems to confirm the religious impulse in education we may note in the first place:

Religious forces are constantly active in recruiting students for higher education and in promoting the general cause of education. It is altogether probable that both state and sectarian institutions receive an impetus through the efforts expended by religious forces. Indeed, Bishop Nicholson asserts from his investigations that where denominational colleges are most largely attended a correspondingly large attendance from the same denomination is found in state institutions. It is reasonable to suppose that causation runs along the line in which effort is expended.

Again: Religious forces contribute to the financial support of higher education far in excess of their proportionate share in the population. Not only do they contribute that share through taxes, but the churches have definitely invested in their institutions of higher learning approximately three-fourths of a billion dollars. They are now engaged in campaigns to secure over \$100,000,000 additional for Christian education and the gifts to higher education primarily from churches and church people total about \$30,000,000 per year.

The third fact which greatly strengthens the presumption that religion is causal to higher education is found in the origin of universities. The extent to which higher education took its rise from religious forces both in this country and in Europe is not sufficiently appreciated in this generation. The impetus given to education by the Protestant Reformation is common knowledge. The origin of our own universities both state and private is not so well known but none the less religious. After exhaustive study on the subject, Elmer E. Brown writes: "Up to 1650 Harvard was as nearly like a state university as the colony was like a modern state, but the college was strongly ecclesiastical in its bent and purpose. . . . The Bishop of London was the first chancellor of William and Mary and Rev. James Blair was the first president. The ecclesiastical purpose of this institution is strongly accented in its charter." The origin of Yale was legally recognized as the library contributed by ministers and in 1701 the school was officially chartered with a body of trustees, "ministers of the Gospel inhabiting in the colony and above the age of forty years." Princeton was practically the result of a religious revival by the Tennents, and of

is enrolled in higher education, whereas among church members of college age, one in every 22 attends college and of Protestant church members 1 in every 16. (This is on the assumption that age groups in the church vary in the same ratio as those in the general population.) IN SHORT, EITHER A REMARKABLE PROPORTION OF EDUCATED YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE A DEFINITE RELIGIOUS CHOICE OR A REMARKABLE PROPORTION OF THOSE IN A RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT INDICATED BY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP ATTEND COLLEGE. THESE FACTS CONSTITUTE AN ASTONISHING COINCIDENCE BETWEEN RELIGION AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

Mere student preference has been ignored as of little weight in these calculations, as similar preference has been secured from almost 100% of the men in army camps enrolled under the draft. On the other hand church membership represents a fairly definite religious status. Similarly these calculations have taken no account of church population as compiled by Dr. Carroll. It has seemed wise to hold to strict lines of membership both in regard to students and the church at large. Neither is it assumed that students are members of a denomination by virtue of attending a church college, as it is well known that students have long since broken from denominational lines in selecting institutions.

### **Does Religion Promote Education?**

Of course, no one can prove **mathematically** from the facts here presented that a definite line of causation runs from religion to higher education. In all probability, they interact on each other in many ways. However, there is much evidence to indicate that religion is the predominant impulse in this association.

Indeed, it is hard to explain this coincidence between church membership and college attendance in any other way. It cannot be purely accidental as the same ratios of membership exist in institutions entirely independent of each other, widely separated in the country and representing a number of denominations which have no common connection. The effort to explain this connection by the assumption that both education and church membership have a common origin is equally unsatisfactory. There is nothing more fundamental than education or religion in which to seek for that impulse. The assumption that education causes this religious affiliation of students is equally unsatisfactory. As a rule the large proportion of church members join the church before the age at which they would be attending college and the educational authorities representing the state are naturally neutral toward the church and expend no effort in promoting it.

For denominational and independent colleges the proportion of church membership among students is even higher. Excluding reports from all those which failed to distinguish membership from preference and **noting only reports from twenty-six institutions which specified membership, we find that the average proportion of communicants is 86.7% of the total students in attendance.** (The proportion expressing church preference is above 96%.)

In 1915 there were 96,797 undergraduate and graduate students in state institutions, not including Normal Schools, and 140,371 students in non-state institutions, making a total of 237,168 graduates and undergraduates in the entire country. As losses from the war have practically canceled any gains since 1914-15, these figures may be considered essentially applicable today. Applying the above ratios of student church membership to the entire field we find, therefore, approximately 72,597 church members in state institutions and 119,316 in non-state institutions, or **191,913, (80%) of all graduate and undergraduate students in the country who are members of some church.**

These figures take on added significance when we relate them to statistics of the church at large. There were 40,515,126 communicants in the various churches in 1917. As the entire population of the country was slightly over 100,000,000, **it follows that while four out of ten in the general population are church members, seven out of ten students in state institutions are members of the church and eight out of ten in all types of institutions of higher education are church members.**

From the Protestant standpoint the comparison is much more favorable. Of the 40,515,000 church members in the country, 15,158,769 are Catholic and 143,000 Jewish, leaving a balance of 25,213,357 Protestant church members, or 25% of the total population. In the 54 state universities referred to above, however, only 3,869 reported their membership or preference for Catholic or Jewish churches. This number is so small a fraction of the 29,880 reporting membership as to leave 70% of the total attendance to the Protestant churches. In other words, **while one out of four of the population of the country is enrolled in the membership of Protestant churches, practically seven out of ten students in state institutions and three out of four in all colleges and universities are members of Protestant churches.** If all classes in the population were as heavily represented in higher education as membership in the Protestant churches is represented by student church members, the attendance at colleges and universities would be almost three times as great. Making the comparison on the basis of those of college age (17 to 23), we find that approximately one person in every 46 of college age



the twenty-three members of its first Board, twelve were ministers. The first president of King's College (Columbia), was a minister and six other ministers were ex-officio members of the Board. Brown University was wholly a church school and Rutgers and Dartmouth largely under church control. In the words of Commissioner Brown: "Nearly all, perhaps all, of the nine Colonial colleges were established primarily for a religious purpose." As President W. O. Thompson summarizes it: "All the New England colleges were born of the Christian impulse and on the theory that the Christian Church owed a duty to society in the matter of education." The movement during the Eighteenth Century, which culminated in the development of state universities was a reaction, not against religion in education, but against sectarianism. Both the universities of Pennsylvania and of the State of New York provided in their charters for ample representation of the religious leaders of the community.

In the middle west, also, the progress of higher education was primarily due to religious impulse. Of the first 119 colleges in the United States, 104 were Christian colleges. There is not a college over fifty years old in the Mississippi Valley which does not owe its origin to the Christian church. Everywhere, religion seems to have been the pioneer and to have furnished the basis on which higher education developed.

All the evidence, both modern and historical, confirms to a remarkable degree the words of President Wilson: **"Scholarship has usually been more fruitful when associated with religion and scholarship has never, so far as I can recall, been associated with any religion except the religion of Jesus Christ."** Considering the wide range of facts establishing a religious impulse, one cannot but feel that religious forces are weighted with heavy responsibility and entitled to much consideration in the conduct of higher education.